



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Jaime A. Molera

Superintendent of
Public Instruction

August 22, 2002

CN# 06-03

To: Administrators of Child Nutrition Programs

From: Lynne Dulin, Director
Student Services

Subject: Purchases of Locally Produced Foods in the School Nutrition Programs

Studies by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the National Academy of Sciences suggest that a diet containing plenty of whole-grain breads and cereals, fruits, and vegetables and is low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may decrease the risk of heart disease and cancer. An abundance of fruits and vegetables are produced locally in Arizona and should be purchased by schools so school meals are well-balanced and nutritious.

In the summer of 1997, the USDA began a comprehensive effort to connect small farms to the school meal programs. Recently, a new paragraph in Section 4303 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 was added at the end of section 9 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. As a result of this provision, schools are encouraged to purchase locally produced foods to the maximum extent practicable. The "farm to school" initiative encourages small farmers to sell fresh fruits and vegetables to schools and encourages schools to buy this wholesome produce from small farmers. A copy of "Small Farms/School Meals Initiative", a step-by-step guide on how to bring small farms and local schools together, is available to assist you in your efforts to purchase locally produced foods at

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/SmallFarms/small.pdf

This provision does not absolve school food authorities of their obligation to adhere to all applicable procurement requirements. School food authorities must still purchase competitively, consistent with Federal and State procurement laws and regulations. Purchases of this type would generally qualify as small purchases under procurement requirements and, therefore, may be procured using informal procedures.

If you need more information, contact your CNP specialist at 602-542-8700.